

Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A)



2005 Legislative Agenda



Maintain In-Home Care System

- Maintain current eligibility criteria for COPEs, MEDICAID PERSONAL CARE (MPC) & CHORE
- Allow individuals to receive long term care at home rather than at expensive care settings



Background

- Maintain current eligibility criteria for COPES, Medicaid Personal Care (MPS) & CHORE
- In-home care allows seniors and persons' with disability to receive care at home rather than in more expensive care settings.



Necessary Action:

- Advocate that the Governor and Legislature maintain the current eligibility criteria rather than making it more restrictive
- Individuals who don't qualify for in-home care will be forced to seek needed care in more expensive settings



Increase Respite Care

- Supports caregivers so they can take care of themselves & continue to provide long term care to a family member
- Supporting informal unpaid caregivers costs less than other long term services



Background

- Majority of caregivers are unpaid
- Caregiving is emotionally stressful & physically demanding
- Caregivers suffer high rates of illness, depression & mortality
- Decisions to place loved one in institution often due to caregiver burnout not health changes in loved one



Necessary Action

- Increase funding to keep pace with growing number of caregivers
- AARP recommends an increase of \$3.7 Million in State's respite program



Raise State Medically Needy Income Level

- “Medically Needy” (MN) clients are low-income elderly or individuals with disabilities who qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), except their income is too high
- Get coverage once they meet medical expense or “spenddown” requirement determined by the MN Income Level



Background

- State guideline allows \$599 of income to go for food, clothing, and shelter
- For some, choices must be made between food & medical care or nursing home instead of care at home
- State's COPES program guideline is set at \$776 per month in line with 2004 Federal Poverty Guidelines



Necessary Action

- Increase Medically Needy Income Level to the federal poverty level
- Would provide participants \$776 per month for non-medical expenses



Continue Funding for Pharmacy Assistance & Education

- Educates adults on wise medication use to prevent misuse and potential health problems
- Increases access to drug discount cards & programs that assist in obtaining needed medications



Background

- State funding supports program to educate seniors about prescription drugs including - accessing, discount eligibility and safety
- Pharmacy Connections Hotline assists callers in accessing discount programs to save money



Necessary Action

- Continue funding to provide consumer education on prescription drug safety & assist in accessing prescription medications they can't afford



Restore Previous Cuts to SCSA

- Senior Citizen's Services Act (SCSA) funds Information and Assistance (I&A) program to link people to information and needed services
- Provides a single point of entry for information, assessment and access to services



Background

- I & A assists older adults in locating and using health and social services
- Primary funding source is State's Senior Citizen's Services Act passed in 1976
- Funding was reduced by the Legislature in 2002 (15% cut)



Necessary Action

- Restore the reduction of \$649,000 to the SCSA
- Provide a 10% increase to restore the Act to meet population growth.



Fund Senior's Farmer's Market Program

- Eating fresh fruits and vegetables improves health and can help prevent expensive health conditions
- Program supports healthy aging



Background

- Provides vouchers for free produce from local farmer's markets
- 9,000 served in 2004
- Grant supporting this program has run out



Necessary Action

- Ask Legislature to fund Senior Farmer's Market nutrition program to ensure healthier lives for low-income seniors and lower health care costs for the state



Current Bill Issues

- HB-1365
 - “alternative delivery systems” not defined
 - Legislative review of new programs could have fiscal & service system impacts
- HB-1220
 - Creates taskforce to study long-term care issues



Maintain Affordable Housing

- “Section 8” voucher program provides housing for low-income families
- King County Housing Authority (KCHA) vouchers house 8,200 families & Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) about 6000 families
- KCHA has 5,000 families on waiting list



Background

- Congress reduced appropriations and approved fixed funding formula
- Reduces 2005 funding for KCHA by \$3.5 M & SHA funding by \$4 M
- May eliminate 375 vouchers from KCHA program
- SHA will provide no new vouchers & is looking at other options



Necessary Action

- Help identify necessary program changes which may include higher rent, reduced utility allowance or decreased rent for landlords
- Provide public comments at section8@kcha.org or attend Public Hearing on Feb 14th 6-8 PM at White Center Heights Elementary School

ADVOCACY “101”





Ten Advocacy Commandments

- Start early
- Do your homework
- Tell the truth
- Keep it simple
- Take friends where you find them



Ten Advocacy Commandments

- Know your opponents
- Think big, but know your bottom line
- Build coalitions
- Work in local communities
- Thank those who help you



Meet With Legislators

- Be direct & brief - use humor
- Congratulate them on legislation they have been able to enact or co-sponsor
- Bring a group representing the people from the district - localize the issue
- Agree in advance who will speak
- Summarize what you want in writing
- Thank them for making time to meet



Write Letters

- Identify yourself
- Use your own words
- Use a personal story
- Be specific about the action you need
- Ask for a written response



Call Legislators

- Write down key points in advance
- State your name & why you are calling
- Be specific about what you need
- Urge others to call



“Bird-dogging” Legislators

- Show up face-to-face at events
- Use visuals - signs, stickers, fact sheets
- Listen as well as try to sell your point
- Share compelling personal stories
- Use opportunities to talk with the press and legislators